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THE BIRD COLLECTIONS OF GENOA MUSEUM
OF NATURAL HISTORY « GIACOMO DORIA » :
AN HISTORICAL OUTLINE (***)

Abstract. — Some historical notes are briefly traced concerning the Genoa Museum of Natural History founded by Marquis Giacomo Doria in 1867, and its ornithological collections, so valuable for the richness of specimens and the presence of rare forms and type material.

Riassunto. — *Le collezioni ornitologiche del Museo Civico di Storia Naturale « Giacomo Doria » di Genova: cenni storici.*

Il Museo di Storia Naturale « Giacomo Doria » di Genova vanta una collezione ornitologica particolarmente ricca e di alto valore scientifico per la presenza di un numero cospicuo di tipi e di forme rare ed estinte. Essa nacque e si accrebbe soprattutto grazie alle spedizioni di esplorazione e di raccolta compiute sul finire del secolo scorso e agli inizi dell'attuale. Collezioni pregevoli furono riportate da G. Doria, O. Beccheri, L. M. D'Albertis, L. Loria ed E. Modigliani dall'Australia, dalla Nuova Guinea e dall'Indonesia; da L. Fea dalla Birmania e dall'Africa occidentale; da V. Bottego, O. Antinori, C. Citerni, V. Ragazzi, E. Ruspoli, R. Franchetti, S. Patrizi dall'Africa orientale; nonché da G. Bove e D. Vinciguerra dall'America australe. Tali imponenti raccolte furono oggetto di studio da parte di valenti ornitologi, tra i quali campeggia la figura di Tommaso Salvadori, che scrisse oltre 80 memorie dedicate ai materiali del Museo di Genova, descrivendo oltre 250 nuove specie ed un buon numero di nuovi generi.

Tra le serie meglio rappresentate vanno ricordate quelle delle Paradisee, degli Psittaciformi, degli Alcedinidi, dei Casuari. Tra le specie estinte, il Fregiluppo, il Colombo migratore, il tipo di *Lamprolaima rothschildi* Bann. e l'ultimo esemplare di Francolino italiano ucciso in Sicilia.

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The Genoa Natural History Museum « Giacomo Doria » is the proud possessor of a particularly rich ornithological collection of remarkable scientific value, due to the presence of an outstanding number of type specimens as well as rare and extinct forms.

The Collection originated and was increased for more than a century around an early nucleus of specimens which Marquis Giacomo Doria collected and arranged in his own house, before founding the Museum itself; these were mostly birds from Liguria shot by the Marquis. In a short time these were increased by a precious series of species collected by G. Doria and Odoardo Beccari in Borneo between the years 1865 and 1868.

After the Museum was founded in 1867, thanks to the donation of the whole valuable Doria collection to the City of Genoa, several expeditions of exploration were promoted, through the initiative of Doria, yielding rich collections among which the ornithological specimens are the most important. The specimens, as they arrived to the Museum from each expedition, were committed for study to several distinguished specialists; outstanding among these was Tommaso Salvadori, who wrote well over 80 memoirs (mostly published in the « Annali del Museo di Genova » and in the « Atti della R. Accademia delle Scienze di Torino »), describing over 250 species new to science in addition to a good number of new genera.

The most impressive part of the Collection, both as concerns rarity and novelty, comes from the Malayan Archipelago and from Papuasia.

During travels undertaken between 1871 and 1878, Luigi Maria D'Albertis explored the northern part of New Guinea, its southern coast, ascending the river Fly and later reaching Australia. He brought back different remarkable collections of birds, most of them new to science, including a splendid series of *Paradisaeidae*.

At about the same time, Odoardo Beccari visited New Guinea, Aru and Kei Islands, Moluccas, Java, Sumatra and Celebes, where he assembled, on behalf of Genoa Museum, a large number of specimens which were particularly valuable for the amount of ecological and ethological observations which he made on this occasion.

Between 1886 and 1894 Elio Modigliani brought back some remarkable bird collections of considerable interest, including several new forms from Nias, Engano, Mentavei and Sumatra.

Similar brilliant results were achieved during the years 1888-1897 in New Guinea by Lamberto Loria who explored the Purari River course and the Astrolabe Mountain chain.

Between 1885 and 1889 Leonardo Fea brought back a rich set of birds, splendidly prepared, twelve of which were still undescribed, from Burma and the surrounding regions.

African Avifauna is well represented too in the Museum. Parallel to the flow of specimens from eastern lands, consistent ornithological material was reaching our Museum from the Black Continent, thanks to the expeditions of various travellers and explorers. The earliest collections date back to the beginning of the Italian Colonial expansion. In 1870 a scientific mission consisting of Marquis Orazio Antinori, Odoardo Beccari and Arturo Issel undertook the exploration of the Red Sea area and the Bogos land (Eritrea), bringing back a considerable number of zoological specimens, including a rich collection of birds.

Other important ornithological material from Africa arrived at the Museum thanks to the collections made by: Vincenzo Ragazzi in Shoa, Harrar and Assab between 1882 and 1890; Don Eugenio dei Principi Ruspoli in Somaliland during the years 1892-1893; Capt. Carlo Citerni on the Italian-Ethiopian border between 1910-1911; Marquis Saverio Patrizi in Somaliland (1919), Congo (1927), the oasis of Kufra (1931) and in Lower Giuba and Oltregiuba (1934); C. Confalonieri in the oasis of Giarabub (1926-1927); Baron Raimondo Franchetti in Dancalia in 1928; etc.

The historical expedition undertaken by Captain Vittorio Bottego in the Juba region in 1892-1893 yielded a huge quantity of material for the Museum, yet birds were not represented at all. His following expedition to Omo (1896-1897) — which cost him his life — brought only three bird skins to the Museum, the « ornithological relics » as Salvadori later named them, one of which was new to science (*Francolinus bottegi* Salvadori).

Bird material of remarkable value was collected by Leonardo Fea during his travels to Western Africa: Capo Verde Islands (1895-98) and, afterwards, Portuguese Guinea, the Gulf of Guinea Islands, Cameroun and French Congo (1898-1903).

The Bird section of the Genoa Museum owes its fame to the Austro-malayan and African specimens, but does not lack beautiful series from other parts of the world.

The Italian expedition to Antarctica guided by Giacomo Bove in 1881-1882 produced a rich number of bird specimens for the Museum.

From the New World, a valuable group of *Trochilidae* should be mentioned, which was formed in several subsequent years thanks to the concern and generosity of many different donors.

Concerning the Italian avifauna, the first nucleus of the Collection due to Doria's shooting in his early youth and to his purchases from the well known taxidermist L. Denegri, was successively increased by some new acquisitions and donations of specimens, mainly of Ligurian provenance, from local shots and naturalist friends.

Among the extinct or rare birds, the following should be remembered: a male of *Moho nobilis* caught in Hawaii in 1874 by Luigi Maria D'Albertis; *Ectopistes migratorius*; a superb mounted specimen of *Fregilupus varius* from Réunion, received from Prof. E. H. Giglioli of Florence; the type of *Lamprolaima rothschildi*, a probably extinct form described by Bannerman in 1919, from Leonardo Fea's travel to Principe Island in 1901; *Notiomystis cincta* from New Zealand; *Anas wyvilliana* from the Sandwich Islands, by L. M. D'Albertis; several specimens of *Strigops habroptilus* and *Pezoporus formosus*; the rare *Meliarchus sclateri* from the Solomon Islands; the last Italian specimen of *Francolinus francolinus* shot in Sicily and presented in 1871 by the Marquis T. Allery di Monterosato.

Among the bird families best represented for the richness of specimens and types and which have been studied in particular by several famous Ornithologists (F. De Filippi, E. Festa, E. Mayr, G. F. Mees, W. Meise, E. Moltoni, T. Salvadori, P. L. Sclater, R. B. Sharpe, etc.), should be remembered: *Casuariidae* (with the types of *Casuarus Becarii* Sclater and *Casuarus occipitalis* Salvadori); *Accipitridae* (with the types of *Megatriorchis doriae* Salvad. & D'Albertis, *Harpyopsis novae-guineae* Salvad., *Circus spilothorax* Salvad. & D'Albertis, . . .); *Rallidae* (type of *Megacrex inepta* D'Albertis & Salvad.); *Columbidae* (many types of different genera and a superb series of Gouras); *Musophagidae* (with the holotype of *Turacus ruspolii* Salvad.); *Psittacidae* and *Alcedinidae* (both with many genera and types); among the *Passeriformes*, a splendid series of *Paradisaeidae* and *Ptilonorhynchidae* (with the types of *Loria loriae* Salvad., *Drepanornis albertisii* (Sclater), *Paradisaea raggiana* Sclater, *Xanthomelus ardens* D'Albertis & Salvad., . . .), as well as *Campyphagidae*, *Nectariniidae*, *Meliphagidae*, *Muscicapidae* sensu lato, *Dicaeidae*, *Zosteropidae*, etc.

(A selected bibliography about Genoa ornithological collections will be published in the « Annali del Museo Civico di Genova » in the near future, together with the complete catalogue of the Bird types preserved in the Museum).